

RESILIENCY AND THE SUCCESSFUL FIRST-GENERATION COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENT: IDENTIFYING EFFECTIVE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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This study examined what differences in resiliency traits, if any, exist between successful and non-successful first and continuing-generation college students through the use of a survey. For the purposes of this study, first-generation students were those students whose parents have never attended college and continuing-generation college students were those students whose parents have attended some college.

For the purposes of this study, the term successful was defined as those students who after being enrolled during fall 2005 re-enrolled for the spring 2006 semester and the term non-successful is defined as those students who after being enrolled fall 2005 semester failed to re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.

A sample of 164 students was surveyed by collecting demographic data, resiliency traits, attitudinal characteristics, level of familial support, and reasons for dropping out of college. A sub-sample of 40 students participated in a face-to-face, in-depth interview.

This study found that successful first-generation community college students possessed certain common qualities or resilient characteristics that include: 1) social competence, 2) problem-solving skills, 3) critical consciousness, 4) autonomy, and 5) sense of purpose.

Through the face-to-face interviews common themes emerged. Many of the students used similar words to describe their feelings and experiences about beginning, continuing and withdrawing from college. Many of the first-generation college students

expressed the lack of familial support once they enrolled. Common themes emerged for the continuing-generation college students in that each student was comfortable with the process of selecting a major, selecting courses to enroll in, and the amount of time they expected to devote to studying.

The return rate for each of the four groups studied was limited and rigorous follow up efforts failed to increase the return rate. This is a fundamental limitation of the study, and the results can only be generalized to the institution studied. However, the findings in this study are consistent with the literature on retention and dropout rates for these students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

First-generation college students have distinctive personal and educational experiences that directly contribute to their educational successes or failures. This population of college students does not typically have the same resources or support as continuing-generation college students. Research indicates that this deficiency forces first-generation college students to rely more heavily on motivational factors to achieve academically than do those of continuing-generation college students (Billson & Terry, 1982, Terenzini et al., 1996; York-Anderson & Bowman, 1991).

When a first-generation college student makes the decision to pursue educational dreams beyond the high school level, he or she is deciding to do what no other person in their family has attempted before (Merullo, 2002). Merullo states that since this is “a first” in the family setting, family norms and customs are challenged thus creating a struggle between family members and the student.

First-generation college students usually experience a tremendous amount of turmoil and hardship once they make the decision to attend college (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992). These college students may include the typical freshman, directly out of high school or the more non-traditional student who is coming to college for the first time after having a family. Many first-generation college students are adult, dislocated workers who are searching for retraining or upgrading of their skills. They repeatedly face the difficult situation of functioning in two worlds at the same time. These students frequently struggle to live in the world of their family and friends as well as that of the college environment. They are

often thrown into a world of middle-class students who are self assured and savvy when it comes to navigating the college lifestyle. This difference places the first-generation student in an indeterminate state between the two worlds, not quite “fitting-in” in either. They find themselves not being able to discuss their college experiences with their families due to a lack of college experience on the part of family members. Equally, they are unable to discuss the same college experiences with students who do not understand the turmoil experienced by first-generation college students. These students are often conflicted as to how they will reconcile the demands of their daily lives, their family relationships, study time and their course work (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992).

Family and friends of first-generation college students can be non-supportive and even discouraging due to their not understanding the need for a college degree. To these students, the price of personal growth can imply loss; loss of family support, loss of friendships and loss of the “known” (London, 1989). Parents can be distrusting of the educational system, therefore, not financially supporting the younger, first-generation college student. Parents often struggle with the need to support the family or younger siblings and can not see how paying tuition is an investment in the future. This lack of financial support may force the student to work in order to have the means to attend college (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992). Continuing generation college students perceived their families as providing both financial and emotional support for attending college more so than did the first-generation college students studied. Parents have reaped the benefits of investing in a

college degree and place value on investing financially in their children's education (York-Anderson & Bowman, D.C., 1991).

Adult first-generation college students are often unprepared for college-level course work and are therefore required to spend additional time and money on developmental courses (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992). This remediation places additional time, educational and financial strains on adult students who have families to raise and support. The failure to pass admission tests may also give rise to the students' experiencing feelings of inadequacy or a belief they may not be capable of comprehending college-level course work. These feelings of inadequacy must also be factored in when predicting student success in college (Merullo, 2002, London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992).

In support of past studies Bui (2002) found that many first-generation college students are convinced they are less prepared for college, concerned more about financial aid, more apprehensive about failing, and reported knowing less about the social climate of college. These students do not know where to begin in trying to apply for admission and enrolling in classes. Bui goes on to explain that first-generation college students study longer and more often than those students whose family members have previously attended college (Bui, 2002). The literature indicates that first-generation college students are often the largest group of students to leave the college or university before they obtain a certificate or degree (Billson and Brooks-Terry, 1982, Billson, 1987; Brooks-Terry, 1988).

Facing all these obstacles could force any first-generation college student to drop out of college in the face of such hardships. However, there are many first-generation college students who persist and overcome these obstacles in efforts to obtain a college certificate or degree. What traits do successful first-generation college students possess that assists them in obtaining a college degree or certificate? Do first-generation college students who drop out of college before obtaining a degree or certificate possess these same traits? The purpose of this study was to examine any differences that may exist between successful first-generation community college students who continue to enroll or obtain a degree or certificate and those first-generation community college students who were enrolled during the semesters studied and who left the college before obtaining a degree or certificate. This study also sought to identify what student support services, as identified by the participants, assisted them in their persistence in continued enrollment towards obtaining a certificate or degree and what additional student support services are needed to assist this group of students.

Statement of the Problem

This study identified successful and unsuccessful first-generation community college students (students whose parents have never attended college) and identified what, if any, differences exist in the resiliency traits among successful first-generation community college students and unsuccessful first-generation community college students.

This study examined the reasons, traits and student support services that successful first and continuing-generation community college students report as contributing to achieving their higher education goals.

This study identified what institutional student support services, as identified by the subjects, assisted the successful first-generation college student as well as what, if any, institutional student support services, as identified by the subjects who withdrew, might have assisted them in persisting to a degree or certificate.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do resiliency traits as indicated on the Interest and Attitude Survey differ among first-generation community college students who continue to enroll or persist until they obtain a degree or a certificate and first-generation college students who withdraw from the institution prior to obtaining a degree or certificate during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters?
2. To what extent do resiliency traits as identified on the Interest and Attitude Survey differ among continuing-generation community college students who continue to enroll or persist until they obtain a degree or a certificate and continuing-generation college students who withdrew from the institution prior to obtaining a degree or certificate during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters?
3. As indicated through the face-to-face interviews, to what extent, if any, do successful first-generation community college students report emotional familial support system?
4. As indicated through the face-to-face interviews, to what extent, if any, do successful, continuing-generation community college students report emotional familial support system?
5. What institutional student support services, as identified by the subjects, assist the successful first-generation community college student?
6. What, if any, institutional student support services, as identified by the subjects who withdrew, might have assisted them in persisting to a degree or certificate?

Significance of the Study

Student retention has become a focus of community college personnel due to large increases in student enrollment, increased budget demands and declining state funding. Identifying resiliency characteristics of successful first-generation community college students could benefit college administrators in developing recruitment and retention models and programs to facilitate student persistence. A review of the literature indicates there are many factors that affect student retention and research is being conducted to identify various ways to address this issue. Thus community college personnel must design and implement effective programs that facilitate an increase in student retention. Many community colleges are looking to other institutions for programs in retention to be used as models (Swail, 2004). In the area of retention, research points to academic and social support as two important factors in retention efforts. This support could be in the form of tutoring, mentoring, counseling, supplemental instruction and study groups. The third condition for student retention is involvement. "The more frequently students engage with faculty, staff and their peers, the more likely that they will persist and graduate" (Tinto, 2002).

Terenzini et al. (1994) stated that first-generation college students benefit from the validating experience:

Validation is empowering, confirming, and supportive. It is a series of in- and out-of-class experiences with family, peers, faculty members, and staff through which students come to feel accepted in their community, receive confirming signals that they can be successful in college and are worthy of a place there, have their previous work and life experiences recognized as legitimate forms of knowledge and learning, have their contributions in class recognized as valuable and so on. (p.66)

Terenzini et al. (1994) provided a list of seven suggestions for colleges to ease the transition from high school to higher education: (1) "Promote awareness of the varying character of the transition process for different kinds of students," (2) "Early validation appears to be a central element in students' successful transition to college," (3) "Involve faculty in new student orientation programs," (4) "Orient parents as well as students," (5) "The transition to college involves both in and out-of-class experiences," (6) "Institutional accommodations are required," (7) "Somebody has to care," meaning the institution should adopt a caring philosophy and reach out to this population of students (p.69-72).

This study was designed to identify what differences exist in resiliency traits, if any, between successful first-generation community college students who continue to enroll or who persist until they obtain a certificate or degree and non-successful first-generation community college students who withdraw from the institution without completing a certificate or degree. This study was also designed to identify what differences exist in resiliency traits, if any, between successful continuing-generation community college students who continue to enroll or who persist until they obtain a certificate or degree and unsuccessful continuing-generation community college students who withdraw from the institution without completing a certificate or degree. What can college counselors learn from these persistent students that might be helpful in assisting other students to persist in college until certificate or degree obtainment? By conducting one-on-one interviews with a smaller group of the participants, this study also sought to identify familial, institutional and student support services that positively affect and foster the success of first-generation community college students.

Delimitations of the Study

This study did not address all community college students, but did examine those students who were first-generation community college students (students whose parents never attended college) who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and re-enrolled in the spring 2006 semester in their pursuit of a certificate or degree. Also studied were non-successful first-generation community college students who did not re-enroll in the spring 2006 semester after being enrolled in the previous fall 2005 semester. This study also examined successful continuing generation community college students (students whose parents attended some college and who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and who re-enrolled for the spring 2006 semester) and non-successful continuing-generation students (students whose parents attended some college and who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester, but did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester).

Another delimitation of this study is that only one community college was involved in the collection of data.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study was that students included may have dropped out of college before the study was completed. There may have also been a certain amount of sampling error since students were asked to complete a questionnaire voluntarily; thus, making this a convenience sample.

Assumptions

It was assumed that some of the subjects would have the potential to complete a degree or certificate during the fall 2005 or spring 2006 semesters or continue to enroll towards degree attainment. It was also assumed that some differences in resiliency traits would be identified in all four groups of students researched. I also assumed that there would be some difficulty in contacting first-generation community college students after they dropped out of college do to the lack of up to date personal contact information such as email addresses and telephone numbers.

Definition of Terms

- Persistence – for the purpose of this study is defined as those students who after enrolling and attending the fall 2005 semester registered during the spring 2006 semester toward completion of a degree or certificate attainment.
- Resiliency – Resilience is a multifaceted process by which individuals exhibit the ability to draw the best from the environment in which they find themselves. Resilience may be drawn from the family, school and community (Freiberg, 1993). For the purpose of this study – resiliency was self-rated on an 18 item attribute scale designed by Komada from characteristics that are associated with resiliency in the literature addressing first-generation college students.
- Retention – For the purpose of this study, a student who enrolled in the fall semester 2005 who registered and continued his or her studies during the spring semester of 2006.
- First-generation students – students whose parents had never attended college and who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester.
- Successful first-generation students – students whose parents did not attend college, but who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and re-enrolled for the spring 2006 semester working towards degree or certificate attainment from North Central Texas College.
- Non-successful first-generation college students – students whose parents had not obtained a college degree or certificate who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester, but did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.

- Successful continuing-generation college students – students whose parents attended some college and were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and re-enrolled for the spring 2006 semester.
- Non-successful continuing-generation college students – students whose parents attended some college and were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.
- Student support services – those services offered by the institution that are designed to assist students with their educational process, i.e. counseling, advising, financial aid and student life.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Reasons Students Leave College

Astin (1984) theorized that students' decisions to leave college are linked to these 8 factors: (1) family and individual educational background, (2) academic potential, (3) peer support, (4) intellectual development, (5) academic performance, (6) social integration, (7) satisfaction and (8) institutional commitment. Astin further stated that students who actively participate in student government, student life, devote time to academics and who spend a large amount of time on campus tend to persist until graduation. Astin believed that the quality and quantity of the student's involvement in the institution greatly influenced the amount of learning and development the student experienced while in college.

Allen (1999) theorized that high levels of family emotional support and involvement, parents with a degree in higher education, and high academic performance in high school all increased the college student's persistence until degree completion. Riehl (1994) found that first-generation college students in comparison to their continuing-generation equivalent have less support from their families in attending college and do not spend as much time after classes with friends and instructors. Riehl went on to report that first-generation college students have poorer retention rates than do their peers. York-Anderson and Bowman (1991) discovered that first-generation college students receive less guidance and support from their parents in making the decision to enroll in college.

In support of past studies Bui (2002) found that many first-generation college students are convinced they are less prepared for college, concerned more about financial aid, more apprehensive about failing, and reported knowing less about the social climate of college. Bui goes on to explain that first-generation college students study longer and more often than those students whose family members have previously attended college (Bui, 2002). The literature indicates that first-generation college students are often the largest group of students to leave the college or university before they obtain a certificate or degree (Billson and Brooks-Terry, 1982, Billson, 1987; Brooks-Terry, 1988).

Ishitani (2003) highlighted another significant issue in that the risk of voluntary drop-out was greater among first-generation college students during their first year. Ishitani also discovered that first-generation college students were more likely to drop-out of college in comparison to their non-first-generation college student counterparts. The risks were reduced the longer the first-generation college student was enrolled.

Adult first-generation college students are often unprepared for college-level course work and are therefore required to spend additional time and money on developmental courses (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992). This remediation places additional time and financial strains on adult students who have families to raise and support. The failure to pass admission tests may also give rise to the students' experiencing feelings of inadequacy or a belief they may not be capable of comprehending college-level course work. These feelings of inadequacy must also be factored in when predicting student success in college (Merullo, 2002, London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London,

1992). Remedial education is often required for the students who failed to pass the institutional placement test. These remedial courses are made up of both the traditional college student as well as those students who have been out of the classroom for years. Powers (2006) found that older students often times are required to enroll in remedial courses because of not having the skills to be in a college level course, but also found that those older students who completed the course went on to be successful in their college level courses. Powers research also suggested that first-generation students who required and completed remedial courses more than doubled their odds of graduating with a certificate or degree. However, her research also suggested that younger students who passed the same remedial courses were twice as likely to graduate as their more adult classmates.

A study conducted to identify differences between first and second generation college students and on-line learning found that first-generation college students felt less comfortable when using the computer. The research findings were supported by previous research on first-generation college students, mainly stating that they do not have the same skill levels as continuing-generation college students (Williams & Hellman, 2004). Additional research addressing different characteristics between first and continuing generation college students found that first generation students tend to be older, work at least 30 hours each week outside of the home, be from low-income families, and tend to be less academically prepared for college level work. First-generation community college also often had problems understanding the language of higher education that may be commonplace or familiar to continuing-generation college students. The researchers also found that the continuing-generation college students

understood what a credit hour was and what it meant to add or drop a class (Gibbon & Shoffner, 2004).

Writ, Choy and Gerald's (2001) findings suggested that continuing-generation college students begin preparing for college early in their junior year of high school by taking standardized tests', completing admission and financial aid paperwork, obtaining enrollment dates and procedures and visiting the college campuses they may have an interest in attending. Parents of the continuing-generation college students were involved in the selection of colleges their children applied to as well as the majors selected and courses enrolled in. Continuing-generation college students also received assistance with homework assignments, use of the family car, and both emotion and financial support. Writ found this not to be true of the first-generation college student.

London (2001) found that first-generation college students had a difficult time in blending in on campus, received lower test scores on college placement tests than those of continuing-generation college students. Grayson (1997) found that continuing-generation college students tend to be more involved in campus life and student activities when compared to their first-generation college counterparts. However, Culpepper's (2006) research suggests no difference exists between first and continuing generation college students no matter which types of institutions they choose to attend. He states that the dangers occur because of the perceptions of differences existing between the two student groups. Culpeper believed that these perceptions can lead to low expectations of community college students, therefore supporting a belief that can be held by the faculty, the general public and even the students themselves that

community college students do not have what it takes to be successful in college, regardless of them being first or continuing generation students.

Why then do some first-generation college students persist until degree completion while others do not? Are there certain identifiable characteristics in first-generation college students who persist until degree completion and those who do not? Are there certain student support services that could be designed based on the research to assist these students to certificate or degree attainment? Recent studies found that 45% of all undergraduates were first-generation college students between the years of 1995-96. In 1994, 55% of all first-generation students were enrolled in community college (McConnell, 2000). These findings seem to question what community colleges are doing to prepare for these students and what programs are being implemented to assist this group of students in their quest for a certificate or associate's degree.

Reasons Students Attend College

The American educational system is among some of the most diverse educational systems in the world however, a vast inequality exists in the educational attainment of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic backgrounds and gender. These inequalities seem to continue to divide the American society into greater disparities between the "haves" and the "have not's." First-generation college students make-up a large portion of the racially, economically and gender disadvantaged in America (Lohfink & Paulsen, 2005). Fischer & Hebel (2006) stated in their research that geographic "haves" and "have not's" also exist in today's

society. An increasing number of rural community colleges have classes that are made up of students from groups that historically have been under-represented in higher education. This under-represented group includes students who are first generation community college students and immigrants who speak English as a second language. Financial aid and assistance is extremely difficult to come by in these rural areas and community colleges have little clout in obtaining additional state funding and have small tax bases.

First-generation college students' reasons for attending college differ from their continuing-generation college student counterparts. First-generation community college students see the attainment of a certificate or degree as a mode of career preparation and a means to better themselves financially in providing for their families. Continuing-generation college students usually site personal growth as their main reason for degree attainment. First-generation college students more frequently enroll in community colleges because they are close to home, low in cost and offer programs they want more often than do continuing-generation college students. The programs offered must focus on a job-related skill that allows the student to be employed in a specific occupation. First-generation college students usually only apply to one institution, indicating that institution was their first choice as an institution of higher learning (McConnell, 2000).

Resiliency

Benard (1991) believed that individuals have an innate capacity for resiliency. She defined resiliency as a quality in children who, though exposed to significant stress

and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to failure. She believed that what makes students resilient is their strength of individual characteristics. Benard was able to identify certain common qualities or characteristics in resilient youth. These youths possessed: social competence, problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose. Benard (1993) further reported that resilient youth were optimistic about their futures therefore allowing them to gain some sort of control over their environment. Resilient youth had a sense of purpose and believed in their ability to influence events around them.

Choy (2001) believed that participation in higher education had positive benefits for individuals and for society. In a longitudinal study conducted over a nine year period researchers looked at students who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time between 1989 and 1990, finding from the research indicated that the likelihood of an individuals enrolling in higher education is strongly related to the parents' educational level. Researchers also discovered that 65 % of the students in this study whose parents had never attended college had enrolled in an institution of higher education compared to 85% of students whose parents held at least a bachelors degree. Researcher believed that the path to enrolling in an institution of higher learning included five steps. First the student would need to decide that they wanted to attend college. Secondly, they would then begin to prepare academically for college-level work by taking classes that assisted them in obtaining certain skills. Thirdly, they would need to study for and take the SAT or ACT test for admission purposes. Fourth, they must begin to look at which colleges or universities they would prefer to attend and then complete an application to those colleges or universities. Lastly, they would obtain acceptance to the

college or university of their choice and enroll in classes. However, the research indicates that students whose parents never attended college were 65% less likely to complete all five steps of selecting and enrolling in a college or university when compared to their continuing-generation student counterparts. In fact, these first-generation students reported a lower educational expectation to even attend college than their peers as early as the 8th grade.

LePage-Lees (1997) researched “over a two year period” a group of 21 women who were disadvantaged while growing-up, but somehow managed to either obtain a graduate school degree or were in their final semesters of a graduate program. Participants for the study were recruited from flyers posted around university campuses. LePage-Lees defined these women as disadvantaged due to the fact that they were raised in low-income homes, were first-generation college students and had experienced some sort of stress and/or physical or mental abuse as children. Many of the women in LePage-Lees’ study did not receive familial support and some considered their families as obstacles to their education. In fact, many of these women made great achievements despite their families. These women did not perform well while in high school and felt that being able to attend college was in itself a tremendous triumph. LePage-Lees found that 90% of these women were firstborn children in the family, 90% grew up in rural communities; 95% reported they were heavily involved in church or community activities and most claimed that their greatest support came from their husbands and children. LePage-Lees’ research resulted in a list of common personality traits held by all of these 21 women. The common personality traits included: independence and maturity, benevolence, some self-confidence, perfectionism,

perseverance and the ability to see an advantage in disadvantages and to take something positive out of a negative experience. Women in this study referred to these negative experiences as lessons that helped them to become stronger and appreciate the achievements they made even more. However, education did not come easily for these women – many lacked confidence and felt out of place, yet they persisted because they were motivated to change their lives. One student explained that as she got older she realized that she knew what she wanted out of life and that once you achieve an education and have that diploma in your hand it opens up opportunities for a better economic future for themselves and their families. She now provides the encouragement that she never got to succeed in college to her son.

Komada's Study Results

Komada conducted her study at a private, co-educational, Catholic University in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The participants in her study were traditional aged college students whose ages ranged from 18-22 years of age and who lived on campus in the university's residence halls. The total enrollment at the time her study was conducted was 6600 students, similar to the enrollment at North Central Texas College were this study was conducted. The ethnic breakdown of the university at the time of Komada's study was 93.7% white, 3% African-American and another 2.5% of students who reported their ethnic background to be Puerto Rican. Additionally, a small percentage of Asian-American, American Indian and students from other Latino descent made up the remainder of enrollment. When examining the parents of the participants in her study, 65% of them had achieved at least a bachelor's degree with 55% of those

degrees being awarded to the participant's mothers. Komada distributed 300 packets to a convenience sample, that is volunteers were asked to participate, and 115 packets were returned for a return rate of 38%. Komada's (2002) findings were similar to those of LePage-Lees' research. Komada found in a study of first and continuing college students that some similarities existed between the 2 groups. However, she found that many continuing-generation college students described enjoying their first year of college life, while first-generation college students felt out of place or uncomfortable. First-generation college students often felt alone or felt that no one else was around that was like them. Continuing-generation college students joined with their parents in deciding what college to attend and what classes to take, while the first-generation college students made those decisions alone. Komada found that continuing-generation college students discussed college as a way of gaining knowledge to broaden their understanding of the world, to meet new people and to make more money upon graduation. These were similar to the reasons first-generation college students reported as to why they decided to attend college. A higher number of continuing-generation college students in Komada's study expected to continue and to earn a master's degree (Komada, 2002).

Komada research resulted in identifying different resiliency characteristics that existed between first and continuing-generation college students. First-generation college students in Komada's study reported higher resiliency traits in self-esteem, spirituality, high expectations of self, and having had negative educational experiences. Both groups of participants in her study reported similar resiliency scores on feeling socially competent, possession of problem solving skills, independence, sense of

purpose and future, positive relationships with others as a child, and a belief that life is what you make it.

The table below was designed by Nancy Komada, while conducting research for her dissertation using a list of protective factors derived from a literature review on resiliency. Komada documented that resiliency traits in individuals are statistically associated with some or all of the characteristics listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Resiliency Characteristics

Psychological Factors	Familial Factors	Education Experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel socially competent • Possess problem solving skills • Are autonomous • Have a sense of purpose and future • Externalize societal problems • Have a high expectation of self • Possess a strong sense of spirituality or religion • Are generally “content with life” • Feel “life is what you make of it” • Possess individual resourcefulness • Are adaptable/flexible • Motivated • Strong anger to injustice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have early positive relationships • Parent(s) are involved in school and life in general • Are first born (or only child in the nuclear family) • High school friends are planning on attending college • Have a significant person who has encouraged them academically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have early positive educational/career plans • Have a sense of direction or future educational/career plans • Institution communicated with its students • Ability to participate in campus decision-making • College administrator displayed fairness in enforcing rules

Goleman (1995) identified common traits that exist in emotional intelligence and resiliency characteristics. Those common traits included the ability to delay gratification, having a positive outlook on life, and the belief that one has the ability to change their personal situation. Goleman believed that resilient individuals usually bounced back after a negative or stressful situation and are usually optimistic and action oriented. Do these traits exist in community college first-generation students? If so, does possessing these traits assist the first-generation community college in persisting towards a certificate or degree attainment? Komada concluded from her study that further research should be conducted as to what, if any, resiliency traits existed in successful first and continuing generation community college students and what encouraged them to persist toward degree attainment.

Although it is a difficult task to narrow down certain characteristics that might prescribe a student's success or failure, it is the belief of this researcher that it is possible to investigate the components of this success or failure.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study sought to examine what differences in resiliency traits exists, if any, between successful and non-successful first and continuing-generation college students through the use of a survey. The study results are reported based on use of both quantitative and qualitative methodology. This descriptive, exploratory study was designed to include both a survey of community college first-generation and continuing-generation college students. For the purposes of this study, first-generation students are those students whose parents have never attended college. Also for the purposes of this study, continuing-generation college students are those students whose parents have attended some college.

This study sought to examine the differences between successful and non-successful first-generation community college students and successful and non-successful continuing-generation community college students in 2 major components. The first component consisted of charts reporting data collected from a questionnaire and survey constructed by Komada (2002). The second qualitative portion consisted of a narrative detail of information collected through personal interviews. The interviews were structured to assist in the identification of common themes that might exist between the 2 groups of participants.

The Setting

This study was conducted at North Central Texas College, a tri-campus community college. North Central Texas College (NCTC) was established in 1924 and

is the state's oldest continuously operating public two-year college. NCTC is one of the fastest growing community colleges in Texas with a current enrollment of 6585 students.

NCTC is a comprehensive public community college covering a tri-county service area including Cooke, Montague, and Denton counties. The Cooke County campus is located in Gainesville, south of the Texas/Oklahoma border, and at the time of this study enrolled over 1900 students. The Denton County campus is located in Corinth, a progressive urban area, and at the time this study was conducted, enrolled over 4600 students. The rural Montague County campus is located in Bowie and at the time this study conducted, enrolled over 300 students. NCTC's ethnic enrollment breakdown is 78% white, 9.6% Hispanic, 7.4% African American, 2.9% Asian and 2.1% identified as "other." Since 1999 NCTC has experienced a 65% increase in enrollment with 18% of the students being 18 years of age and under, 59% are between the ages of 19-25, 14% are between the ages of 26-35, 7% are between the ages of 36-50 and a 1% enrollment of students who are 50- plus years of age.

Looking at NCTC's total enrollment, an estimated 25% are first-generation college students. However, retention rates for first-generation college students have not kept pace with the college's enrollment growth. Between the fall 2003 and fall 2004 semesters, only 33% of the first-generation college students enrolled were retained; most did not obtain a degree or certificate.

NCTC, much like all community colleges and universities, is continuously searching for information to use in designing special programs to assist students in persisting until degree or certificate obtainment.

This study also sought to identify student support services that, in the student's perception, helped to facilitate their academic success. Students were also asked to identify any student support services that were not in place at the time this study was conducted that, in the student's perception, may have assisted them in their persistence towards re-enrollment or obtaining a college degree.

Several steps were taken in the collection and presentation of the data: (1) Identification of a population of first-generation and continuing-generation community college students, (2) Sorting of the two groups of first and continuing-generation community college students to identify the students who were enrolled in fall 2005 semester and who enrolled in the spring 2006 semester (successful first and continuing-generation community college students), (3) Sorting of the 2 groups of first and continuing-generation community college students to identify the students who were enrolled in fall 2005 semester and who failed to re-enroll in the spring 2006 semester (non-successful first and continuing-generation community college students), (4) Administration of the demographic questionnaire and an Attitude and Interest Survey, (5) Selection of students for interviews, (6) Completion of interviews, (7) Analysis of the data, (8) Presentation of the data. A description of the instruments used and the method of distribution are included. Also included are interview questions and the procedures followed when the interviews were conducted.

The population was derived from successful first and continuing-generation college students who continued to enroll in the spring 2006 semester after being enrolled in the fall 2005 semester. Also studied were unsuccessful first and continuing-generation college students who did not re-enroll in the spring 2006 semester after

being enrolled in the fall 2005 semester. For the purposes of this study, first-generation college students are defined as students whose parents have never attended college. Continuing-generation college students are those students whose parents have attended some college.

Sample and Sample Selection

The objective was to collect a total sample of 400 survey participants. A sort of student data from North Central Texas College identified first and continuing-generation college students through self-declared information collected at registration and on their federal financial aid applications. This convenience sample was selected from a search of available student information from those students who were enrolled during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters. Other participants were non-successful first or non-successful continuing-generation college students who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.

I began selecting potential participants by sorting the North Central Texas College's student database program once the official date of record was reached for the spring 2006 semester. The official date of record for each semester is the twelfth class day and serves as the official date in the semester when the student is officially enrolled in classes and will have a permanent academic record for the semester. The official date of record for the spring 2006 semester was January 30, 2006 with a total student unduplicated enrollment of 6585. Unduplicated enrollment calculates a student's enrollment only once, even though the student may be enrolled at more than one campus. However, students enrolled at more than one campus may be counted in each

campuses total enrollment. Student files were sorted to identify students who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester. The number of students enrolled during the fall 2005 semester was a total of 7019. Data were then separated into 2 different student groups. The first group included self-declared first-generation community college students for a total of 2247 students. The second group included all self-declared continuing-generation community college students with a total of 4659 students. A third group consisted of 113 students who did not complete that question on their student statistical survey distributed by the admissions office or on their federal financial aid form that asked for the education level of their parents, these students were not sent an email requesting their participation in this study.

Once the 2 groups of students were identified, I then checked to see which students in each group had re-enrolled in the spring 2006 semester, looking for matching records which would identify the total number of first-generation community college students who were enrolled in the fall 2005 semester and who were also enrolled in the spring 2006 semester, thus identifying the group of successful first-generation community college students. The results of this search identified a total of 1461 successful first-generation community college students. The remaining 786 students were labeled as non-successful first-generation community college students since they were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester, but did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.

The file of continuing-generation community college students who were enrolled in the fall 2005 semester was then compared to the students who were enrolled in the spring 2006 semester, looking for matching records to identify the number of successful

continuing-generation community college students. The results of this search identified a total of 3028 students who were labeled as successful continuing-generation community college students since they were enrolled during both the fall 2005 and the spring 2006 semesters. The remaining 1631 students were labeled non-successful continuing-generation community college students since they were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester and did not re-enroll during the spring 2006 semester.

Another search of all 4 student groups sought to identify those students who had an email address on file in the admissions office. Results from that search identified 817 successful first-generation community college students; 467 non-successful first-generation community college students; 1478 successful continuing-generation community college students and 884 non-successful continuing-generation community college students who had email addresses on file.

I used the student data base system to generate and send an email to all 4 groups of students requesting their participation in the study. The email described the requirements for participation in the study as well as information concerning the purpose of the study. Students who wished to participate in the study were instructed to email the researcher of their decision to participate. The students were given the option of responding via email, by telephone call or by U.S. mail.

As I received emails from students agreeing to participate in the study, I responded with an email thanking them for agreeing to participate in the study and attached all forms required for participation as well as instructions for completing the forms. Options for the students to return the data to the researcher were also included in the instructions. Students who agreed to participate were emailed a packet

containing the Consent to Participate in a Research Study form, a Demographic Questionnaire, an Interest and Attitude Survey and instructions on how to complete each form. Participants were instructed to return the completed forms via an email attachment or to deliver the packets either in person or by mail to the Dean of Student Services Office, Room 113 on the Gainesville Campus, Admissions Office on the Corinth Campus or the Counselor's Office on the Bowie Campus.

Second and third set of emails were sent to the same groups of students to follow-up on non-responses to the initial email requesting participation in the study. Also, I employed an individual to follow-up with a telephone call to verify that they had received the email and encouraged them to respond to the request to participate in the study.

Students were asked to indicate on the Interest and Attitude Survey form whether or not they would agree to participate in a one time face-to-face, 30 minute interview. As the surveys were returned, they were labeled as successful first-generation community college students, non-successful first-generation community college students, successful continuing-generation community college students and non-successful continuing-generation community college students based on their responses on the Demographic Questionnaire as to the level of their parent's education and their enrollment status in the institution's student data base system. In the order the surveys were received, I selected 10 successful and 10 unsuccessful first-generation community college students from those participants who agreed to participate in one 30-minute face-to-face interview. I contacted each of the students to schedule a time to conduct the interviews. The same procedure was used to collect successful and non-successful

continuing-generation community college students who agreed to one thirty minute face-to-face interview.

A total of 10 students from each group of students were selected for interviews for a total of 40 students. Participants selected for an interview were contacted by email, while some were notified by a telephone call or letter to schedule an appointment to conduct the interviews.

Interviews were conducted in the Dean of Student's Office on the Gainesville Campus, the Director of Student Services Office on the Corinth Campus, and a conference room at the Bowie Campus. Interviews were recorded by an audio recording device.

All students contacted for interviews kept their scheduled appointment with the exception of 5 students who had to change the day and time of their interview. The 30 minute, audio-taped interviews were conducted from May 2006 through early June 2006.

Instruments and Measurements

Demographic Questionnaire

The Demographic Questionnaire included basic information about the participants and included variables consisting of age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, GPA, and educational information about the participant's parents.

Interest and Attitude Survey

The survey used in this study was comprised of 3 different sections. The first section asked for demographic information pertaining to the survey participants.

Section two collected information concerning the reasons the participants had for enrolling in college through fill in the blank questions. Participants were also asked to report the level of familial support received, if any, as well as to identify career goals. The literature suggests that both the level of familial support and career goals are contributing factors to a student's success provided the student is adequately motivated for college level work (Komada, 2002). The third and final section collected information concerning self-reported resiliency characteristics on a 4 point Likert Scale. The Interest and Attitude Survey was designed by Nancy Komada, while conducting research for her dissertation using a list of protective factors derived from a literature review on resiliency. This survey was designed to collect data to examine why students attend college and persist until degree attainment. Nancy Komada's research was conducted at a private Catholic liberal arts university; however, this study was conducted at a public community college.

Resiliency Characteristics Ratings

Komada inferred the variables in her instrument based on the literature as factors contributing to college students' success provided the student was motivated for college level work.

Using Komada's instrument designed by reading the literature, participants were asked to score themselves on a 4 point Likert scale how they felt about themselves in terms of self-esteem, social competence, overall contentment with life, and personal spirituality.

Structured Interview Questions

Interview questions included in this study were also designed by Komada (2002). The questions were designed to begin a discussion with the participants to identify the reasons they had for selecting this community college, who or what may have influenced their decision to attend or remain in college, what was their main reason for enrolling in college and what, if any, part did the student's family participate in either their decision to attend, remain, or withdraw from college. A sub-sample of 10% of the overall participants was selected from those individuals who indicated they would like to participate in one 30 minute interview. I contacted participants who agreed to submit to the interview based on their answer on their Interest and Attitude Survey as the surveys were received. This structured interview process included a series of 20 questions intended to measure the student's motivation to attend or reason for withdrawal from the college, what role the student's family played in their decision to attend or withdraw from college, and what student support services the student took advantage of that assisted the student in his/her persistence to degree or certificate attainment.

The list of 19 questions were designed by Komada for use in her dissertation research, however, since this study sought to also ask questions of the non-successful first and non-successful continuing-generation college student – an additional question was added to obtain information on why the non-successful first and non-successful continuing-generation college student withdrew from college. The 20th question was only asked of those non-successful first and non-successful continuing-generation college students who withdrew from the institution after being enrolled for the fall 2005

semester and did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester. The structured interview questions are listed below.

Interview Research Questions

1. What was the main reason for your starting college?
2. Why this particular college?
3. Are you involved in anything outside of the classroom (student groups, work, community service, sports, student government)? Explain.
4. Do you work – doing what – where – number of hours – why?
5. Can you remember how you felt the first week of classes? If so, compare that to how you feel now.
6. What student support services assisted you in your college experience, if any?
7. What would you say encourages you to persist in college? What motivates you (internal & external)? What gives you problems?
8. Discussion on the resiliency characteristics from the completed survey. For example, “From the survey you filled out for this study, you claim to have a high self-esteem. What did you mean by that”?
9. How did your family/friends react when you decided to enroll in college?
10. Tell me about your mother and father’s background in education, fields of work, and what role they play in your education.
11. How does your mother and father aid and/or hinder your progress at college?
12. When the chips are down (i.e. low grade(s), heavy work schedule, social problems, cramming for exams), why do you stay/quit?
13. What could have helped you that you didn’t get at home or college?
14. In regard to college, what was the most difficult/easiest?
15. In reference to college, what surprised you?
16. What are your future plans?
17. How do you feel about your classes and our instructors? Explain.

18. How do you feel about your co-curricular participation in college?
19. How do you feel about the institutional support you have availed yourself of (i.e. counseling, library resources, advising, community service opportunities)?
20. What were the main reasons you withdrew from college?

Administration of the Questionnaire

Permission to administer the questionnaire was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Texas, where I attend college and the college administration at North Central Texas College, where the research is being conducted. A copy of the questionnaire accompanied by an explanatory cover letter was emailed to each survey participant. Anonymity of responses was assured to each participant.

Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative data for this study were collected as each survey was received. As completed surveys were returned, the responses were coded and entered into SPSS, a computer program for analysis.

When looking over the responses on the surveys, if the students indicated they were the first person in their family to attend college and they were enrolled in the spring 2006 semester, their surveys were coded as a successful first-generation community college student. If they indicated they were the first person in their family to attend college, but were not enrolled in the spring 2006 semester after being enrolled in the fall 2005 semester, their surveys were coded as a non-successful first-generation community college student.

If the students responded that one or both parents had attended college and was enrolled in the spring 2006 semester, that survey was coded as a successful continuing-generation community college student. If the student responded that one or both parents attended college, but the student was not enrolled in the spring 2006 semester after being enrolled in the fall 2005 semester, that survey was coded as a non-successful continuing-generation community college student.

All surveys were then grouped together according to their codes. Once numerous attempts to contact the students who were eligible to participate in the study had been made with no additional responses, I decided to move forward with the analysis stage of the study. At this point, 164 surveys had been collected. I was no longer receiving responses from the first round of emails sent. I sent a second and third set of emails to the same groups of students to follow-up on non-responses to the initial email requesting participation in the study. Also, I employed an individual to follow-up with each student who had been emailed a request with a telephone call to verify that they had received the email and encouraged them to respond to the request to participate in the study. Because I was no longer receiving responses from the first round or follow up efforts, the decision was made that sufficient responses had been received in order to analyze the data. Of the 817 successful first-generation community college students who qualified to participate in the study, 58 returned surveys; of the 467 non-successful first-generation community college students, 29 returned completed surveys; of the 1478 successful continuing-generation community college students, 51 returned completed surveys; and from the 884 non-successful continuing-generation community college students, 26 returned completed surveys.

The numbers of successful first-generation community college students was larger (n=58) than the non-successful first-generation community college students (n=29). The numbers of successful continuing-generation community college students was larger (n=51) than the non-successful continuing community college students (26).

Goyder (1981) stated that the return rate on questionnaires normally fell between 30-60%. I sought to collect 100 participants from each of the four groups in this study. Of the 817 successful first-generation community college students who qualified to participate in the study, 58 or 5% returned surveys; of the 467 non-successful first-generation community college students, 29 or 3.8% returned completed surveys; of the 1478 successful continuing-generation community college students, 51 or 1.1% returned completed surveys; and from the 884 non-successful continuing-generation community college students, 26 or 2.6% returned completed surveys. The return rate for each of the 4 groups studied was much less than anticipated and follow up efforts failed to increase the return rate. These results are a major limitation of the study and thus an inability to generalize the findings of this research to other similar students at the institution studied.

Answers to the 18 questions on the Interest and Attitude survey were encoded into an Excel spreadsheet and then entered into the SPSS program. For interval data, *t*-tests were conducted and analyzed for frequencies and statistically significant data. All demographic data was collected and analyzed for ranges in age and familial incomes.

Students contacted for interviews kept their scheduled appointment with the exception of 5 students who had to change the day and time of their interview. The 45

minute, audio-taped interviews were conducted throughout mid May 2006 through early June 2006.

Once the interviews were conducted, I transcribed the audiotapes and examined them for any common themes. Common themes were noted for all 4 groups studied as well as common themes for the entire group of students who participated in this study.

Method of Data Reporting

This descriptive, exploratory study was designed to combine both a survey and interview approach to measure resiliency characteristic differences, if any, that exists between successful and non-successful first-generation community college students and successful and non-successful continuing-generation community college students.

Data are reported on the 18 questions from the Attitude and Interest Survey in chart format reflecting the mean, standard deviation of scores and any statistical significance.

Interview questions were transcribed and reported in a descriptive format. Commonalities were reported as well as any significant differences.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATON OF DATA

The data from this study of successful and non-successful first and continuing generation community college students are organized into 3 areas relative to the research questions which guided this study. The chapter includes: (a) an identification of the demographic characteristics of the research participants; (b) data collected from the Attitude and Interest Survey; (c) data collected on resiliency characteristics; (d) qualitative data from the face-to-face interviews; (e) common themes of all participants interviewed; (f) common themes from the face-to-face interviews of successful first-generation community college students; (g) common themes from the face-to-face interviews of non-successful first-generation community college students; (h) common themes from the face-to-face interviews of the successful continuing-generation community college students; (i) common themes from the face-to-face interviews of the non-successful continuing-generation community college students; (j) summary of findings; (k) results of the research questions.

Of the 817 successful first-generation community college students who qualified to participate in the study, 58 or 5% returned surveys; of the 467 non-successful first-generation community college students, 29 or 3.8% returned completed surveys; of the 1478 successful continuing-generation community college students, 51 or 1.1% returned completed surveys; and from the 884 non-successful continuing-generation community college students, 26 or 2.6% returned completed surveys. The return rate for each of the 4 groups studied was much less than anticipated and follow up efforts failed to increase the return rate. These results are a major limitation of the study.

Demographic Profile of Students

The ages of students who participated in this study ranged from 19 to 50 plus years of age. The demographics are summarized in the following table. The total number of students who participated in this study was 164. Table 2 summarizes the following descriptive facts:

- The ages of those studied range from as young as 19 years to as mature as 50 plus years of age. The majority of the study participants ranged from 36-40 years of age and the participants who ranged between 20-25 years of age being the second highest group.
- The ethnic makeup of the study participants were primarily White (63%) and the second highest ethnic group of participants in the study being African Americans (14%), and Hispanic (14%) students respectively.
- Results showed 74% of the total participants in this study were women.
- The primary family income range for students who participated in this study was between \$20,000 and \$39,999.

Table 2

Demographic Data

		Successful First Generation	Non- Successful First Generation	Successful Continuing- generation	Non- Successful Continuing Generation
Age	19- under	1	2	9	8
	20-25	12	7	14	11
	26-30	7	3	11	5
	31-35	3	2	3	2
	36-40	18	13	13	
	41-45	9	1	1	
	46-50	5	1		
	50- over	3			

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued).

		Successful First Generation	Non- Successful First Generation	Successful Continuing- generation	Non- Successful Continuing Generation
Race	White	34	19	35	16
	African American	7	6	5	5
	Hispanic	8	2	9	4
	Asian	2		1	
	American Indian	3	2	1	1
Gender	Male	18	6	13	5
	Female	40	23	38	21
Annual Family Income	\$70,000-above	5	3	16	5
	\$40,000- 69,999	6	6	18	7
	\$20,000- 39,999	29	1	12	14
	\$19,999- below	18	19	5	
	Totals	58	29	51	26

The return rate for each of the 4 groups studied was much less than anticipated. In efforts to increase the return rate, I sent a second and third set of emails to the same groups of students to follow-up on non-responses to the initial email requesting participation in the study. Also, I employed an individual to follow-up with a telephone call to verify that they had received the email and encouraged them to respond to the request to participate in the study. However after numerous follow up attempts failed, I decided to proceed with analyzing the data. These results are a major limitation of the study and thus an inability to generalize the findings of this research to other similar students at the institution studied.

Interest and Attitude Survey

This first portion of this survey measured the students' reasons for attending college. The participants were asked a series of 5 questions in this portion of the survey. The second portion of the survey asked a series of 18 questions asking the participants to rate themselves on a scale of resiliency characteristics. Responses to the 18 questions were scored based on the respondents answering the question, "I feel I..." with 4 (*Always*), 3 (*Usually*), 2 (*Not usually*) or 1 (*Never*).

Reasons for Attending College

The first question on the survey asked the participants what was their main reason for continuing or not continuing your education. Thirty-four of the successful first-generation community college students reported that reason for continuing their enrollment was to get a job or career. Twenty-one students in this group reported the main reason they were continuing their enrollment was for undergraduate degree attainment. The main reason for the non-successful groups for not continuing their education was because they were forced to drop out and get a job due to financial hardships or familial responsibilities. Seventeen of the successful continuing-generation community college students responded that the reason they continued their enrollment was to get a job or career. Another 13 students in this group responded that they continued their enrollment for undergraduate degree attainment, 2 responded they wanted to gain more knowledge, 14 responded they continued their enrollment to prepare for graduate school.

When asked what was the highest degree planned at this time, the responses were different for each of the 4 groups studied. For both the successful and non-successful first-generation community college students the highest degree planned was an Associate's Degree; for the successful continuing-generation community college student the highest degree planned was a Doctorate Degree and the highest degree planned for the non-successful continuing-generation community college students was a tie between a Bachelor's and Master's degree.

The third question asked the participants what they would like to do after they completed their education. Both the successful and non-successful first-generation community college students wanted to make money, while both the successful and non-successful continuing-generation community college students most commonly responded that they planned to work in the field for which their education prepared them for.

The fourth question asked them to rate the top five reasons for attending college. The top five reasons given for attending college from the successful first-generation community college students were (1) to get a job; (2) reduce my dependence on other people; (3) improve my socioeconomic status; (4) a way out of the labor force; (5) increase my self confidence. The top 5 reasons for attending college for the non-successful first-generation community college students were (1) to get a job; (2) increase my self confidence; (3) reduce my dependence on other people; (4) improve my socioeconomic status; (5) a way out of the labor force. The top 5 reasons for attending college for the successful continuing-generation community college students was (1) reduce my dependence on other people; (2) to prepare for grad or professional

school; (3) my parents and family said to go; (4) strengthen my basic skills, reading, math; (5) to get a job. The top 5 reasons for attending college for the non-successful continuing-generation community college students was (1) broaden my understanding of community; (2) reduce my dependence on other people; (3) my parents and family said to go; (4) to prepare for grad or professional school; (5) study new and different subjects.

The final question in this portion of the survey asked each participant if they would agree to be interviewed and continue on in the study. 56 out of 58 of the successful first-generation community college students agreed to be interviewed. 25 out of 29 non-successful first-generation community college students agreed to be interviewed for the study. 47 out of 51 successful continuing-generation community college students agreed to be interviewed for the study and 25 out of 26 non-successful continuing-generation community college students agreed to be interviewed for the study.

Resiliency Characteristics

Students who participated in the study were asked to rate themselves on 18 different resiliency traits on a 4 point Likert scale. The resiliency characteristics focused on protective factors that Komada drew from the literature to identify what protective characteristics may contribute to the student's overall persistence and success in college. Participants rated themselves on how they felt about their level of spirituality, positive relationships, sense of purpose, individual resourcefulness, and their overall contentment with life.

Table 3

Response of Successful and Non-successful First-generation Students

Q	Variable	Successful First-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 58)		Non-Successful First-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 29)		<i>t</i> -Test Sig.	Sig. (alpha=.05)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Socially competent	3.23	0.627	2.64	0.678	3.94	0.000
2	Problem solving skills	3.12	0.629	2.75	0.646	2.55	0.013
3	Independent	2.82	0.966	2.46	1.040	1.58	0.118
4	Sense of purpose	3.53	0.658	3.00	0.720	3.36	0.001
5	Positive Relationship	2.98	1.040	2.79	0.957	0.84	0.404
6	Negative educational experiences	2.37	1.080	2.46	0.922	(0.40)	0.668
7	Parents involved	2.44	1.170	2.96	0.744	(2.18)	0.032
8	Put away problems of world	2.88	0.878	2.71	0.897	0.82	0.414
9	High expectations	3.37	0.899	3.07	0.900	1.43	0.156
10	Strong spirituality	3.18	0.910	2.68	0.723	2.53	0.013
11	High self-esteem	2.89	0.817	2.93	0.730	(0.17)	0.866
12	First born	2.21	1.320	2.68	0.983	(1.66)	0.100
13	Create own destiny	3.00	0.926	3.00	0.544	0.00	1.00
14	Generally content	3.00	0.845	2.89	0.315	0.65	0.519
15	Life is what you make it	3.33	0.787	3.04	0.508	1.82	0.072
16	Individual resourcefulness	3.16	0.797	2.89	0.567	1.57	0.120
17	Adaptable/flexible	3.36	0.841	2.96	0.693	2.14	0.036
18	Sense of direction	3.09	0.948	3.00	0.385	0.49	0.628

Responses to the 18 questions were scored based on the respondents answering the question, "I feel I..." with a 4 (*Always*), 3 (*Usually*), 2 (*Not usually*) or 1 (*Never*).

From Table 3, it should be noted that:

- In comparing the responses of the successful first-generation community college students and the non-successful first-generation students, the mean responses of 6 questions were found to be statistically significant at alpha level .05.

- Significant differences between the successful first-generation community college students and the non-successful first-generation community college students were found for 6 of the variables. The mean responses of the enrolled students were higher than their non-enrolled counterparts on Questions 1, 2, 4, 10, and 17. However, the mean response of the non-enrolled students was higher on Question 7 of the survey.
- As a group, the successful first-generation community college students' rated themselves higher on all but 4 of the eighteen questions, thus rating themselves higher than the mean on the resiliency traits.
- The highest significant findings were that successful first-generation community college students reported having a higher sense of purpose than those of the non-successful first-generation community college student (SFG mean of 3.53 as compared to NSFG mean of 3.00).
- Successful first-generation community college students in this study rated themselves higher than their non-successful first-generation community colleges students on feeling socially competent, problem solving skills, strong spirituality, and adaptability/flexibility.
- Non-successful first-generation community college students rated themselves higher than their successful first-generation community college student's counterparts on feelings of involvement of parents in their decision to continue or not continue in their education (SFG mean of 2.44 as compared to NSFG mean of 2.96).

Table 4

Response of Successful and Non-successful Continuing-generation Students

Q	Variable	Successful Continuing-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 51)		Non-Successful Continuing-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 26)		<i>t</i> -Test Sig.	Sig. (alpha=.05)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Socially competent	3.26	0.829	3.00	0.000	1.56	0.122
2	Problem solving skills	3.34	0.688	3.08	0.640	1.58	0.119
3	Independent	2.74	1.047	2.64	0.757	0.43	0.672
4	Sense of Purpose	3.50	0.814	3.04	0.676	2.43	0.017
5	Positive Relationship	3.18	0.873	3.00	0.817	0.86	0.393
6	Negative educational experiences	2.58	1.071	2.00	0.866	2.35	0.022
7	Parents involved	2.82	1.024	2.76	1.012	0.24	0.811
8	Put away problems of world	3.08	0.966	2.92	0.759	0.72	0.472

(table continues)

Table 4 (*continued*).

Q	Variable	Successful Continuing-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 51)		Non-Successful Continuing-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 26)		<i>t</i> -Test Sig.	Sig. (alpha=.05)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
9	High expectations	3.38	0.725	2.92	0.862	2.43	0.018
10	Strong spirituality	3.20	0.979	2.68	0.802	2.31	0.024
11	High self-esteem	3.18	0.850	2.20	1.000	4.44	0.000
12	First born	2.69	1.330	2.44	1.160	0.81	0.420
13	Create own destiny	3.08	0.778	2.68	1.110	1.82	0.074
14	Generally content	3.12	0.849	2.76	0.663	1.86	0.068
15	Life is what you make it	3.20	0.881	2.56	1.000	2.83	0.006
16	Individual resourcefulness	3.28	0.784	2.76	0.970	2.50	0.015
17	Adaptable/flexible	3.14	0.783	2.80	0.817	1.75	0.085
18	Sense of direction	3.02	0.915	3.08	0.572	(0.30)	0.765

From Table 4, it should be noted that:

- In comparing the responses of the successful continuing-generation community college students and the non-successful continuing-generation students, the mean responses of 7 questions were found to be statistically significant at alpha level .05.
- A comparison of the responses provided by successful continuing-generation community college students and non-successful continuing community college students revealed statistically significant differences between groups in items 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, & 16.
- The highest significant findings were that successful continuing-generation community college students reported having a higher sense of purpose than those of the non-successful continuing-generation community college student (SCG mean of 3.50 as compared to NCFG mean of 3.04).
- Successful continuing-generation community college students in this study rated themselves higher than their non-successful continuing-generation community colleges students on having had a negative educational experience, having high expectations, a strong spirituality, having a high self esteem, believing that life is what you make it and feelings of individual resourcefulness.
- There were no significant differences found in any of the other variables tested in this study.

Table 5

Responses from Successful First- and Successful Continuing-generation Students

Q	Variable	Successful First-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 58)		Successful Continuing-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 51)		<i>t</i> -Test Sig.	Sig. (alpha=.05)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Socially competent	3.23	0.627	3.26	0.828	(0.23)	0.821
2	Problem solving skills	3.12	0.629	3.34	0.688	(1.71)	0.091
3	Independent	2.82	0.966	2.74	1.046	0.44	0.665
4	Sense of Purpose	3.53	0.658	3.50	0.814	0.19	0.854
5	Positive Relationship	2.98	1.044	3.18	0.873	(1.05)	0.295
6	Negative educational experiences	2.37	1.090	2.58	1.071	(1.02)	0.312
7	Parents involved	2.44	1.167	2.82	1.024	(1.78)	0.078
8	Put away problems of world	2.88	0.878	3.08	0.966	(1.07)	0.287
9	High expectations	3.37	0.899	3.38	0.725	(0.07)	0.942
10	Strong spirituality	3.18	0.909	3.20	0.979	(0.16)	0.876
11	High self-esteem	2.89	0.817	3.18	0.850	(1.77)	0.080
12	First born	2.21	1.319	2.69	1.326	(1.88)	0.063
13	Create own destiny	3.00	0.926	3.08	0.778	(0.48)	0.632
14	Generally content	3.00	0.845	3.12	0.849	(0.73)	0.466
15	Life is what you make it	3.33	0.787	3.20	0.881	0.83	0.410
16	Individual resourcefulness	3.16	0.797	3.28	0.784	(0.80)	0.427
17	Adaptable/flexible	3.36	0.841	3.14	0.783	1.37	0.173
18	Sense of direction	3.09	0.948	3.02	0.915	0.39	0.698

From Table 5, it should be noted that:

In comparing the responses of the successful first-generation community college students and the successful continuing-generation community college students there were no statistically significant differences in the responses provided.

Table 6

Responses from Non-successful First-generation and Non-successful Continuing-generation Students

Q	Variable	Non-Successful First-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 29)		Non-Successful Continuing-generation Students (<i>n</i> = 26)		<i>t</i> -Test Sig.	Sig. (alpha =.05)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Socially competent	2.64	0.678	3.00	0.000	(2.63)	1.011
2	Problem solving skills	2.75	0.646	3.08	0.640	(1.87)	0.068
3	Independent	2.46	1.036	2.64	0.757	(0.70)	0.489
4	Sense of Purpose	3.00	0.720	3.04	0.676	(0.21)	0.836
5	Positive Relationship	2.79	0.957	3.00	0.817	(0.87)	0.388
6	Negative educational experiences	2.46	0.922	2.00	0.866	1.88	0.065
7	Parents involved	2.96	0.744	2.76	1.012	0.84	0.403
8	Put away problems of world	2.71	0.897	2.92	0.759	(0.90)	0.375
9	High expectations	3.07	0.900	2.92	0.862	0.62	0.536
10	Strong spirituality	2.77	0.723	2.68	0.802	(0.01)	0.995
11	High self-esteem	2.93	0.730	2.20	1.000	3.01	0.004
12	First born	2.68	0.983	2.44	1.158	0.81	0.421
13	Create own destiny	3.00	0.544	2.68	1.108	1.36	0.181
14	Generally content	2.89	0.315	2.76	0.663	0.95	0.348
15	Life is what you make it	3.04	0.508	2.56	1.003	2.21	0.031
16	Individual resourcefulness	2.89	0.567	2.76	0.970	0.62	0.540
17	Adaptable/flexible	2.96	0.693	2.80	0.817	0.79	0.432
18	Sense of direction	3.00	0.385	3.08	0.572	(0.60)	0.549

From Table 6, it should be noted that:

- In comparing the responses of the non-successful first-generation community college students and the non-successful continuing-generation students, the mean responses of 3 questions were found to be statistically significant at alpha level .05.
- Non-successful first-generation community college students in this study rated themselves higher than their non-successful continuing-generation community colleges students on having a high self esteem and believing that life is what you make it on a statistically significant level.

- The highest significant findings were that non-successful first-generation community college students reported believing that life is what you make it than those of the non-successful continuing-generation community college student (NSFG mean of 3.04 as compared to NSCG mean of 2.56).

Qualitative Data from the Interviews

Overview of the Interview Process

Forty students were selected to be interviewed. These 40 students were selected from those students who checked that they would be willing to be interviewed for the study. The first 10 students who submitted their responses in each of the 4 categories studied were contacted to set up interview dates and times. The main focus of the interview was to gather data in response to the interview questions listed in chapter II of this study.

Format

The interviews questions were emailed to each of the 40 students who agreed to be interviewed along with a request for the best day and time for the participants to come into the office for an interview. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in the Dean of Student Services Office, room 113 on the Gainesville campus, the Associate Dean of Student Services office, room 105 at the Corinth campus and the conference room at the Bowie campus.

Each interview was audio taped for accuracy purposes. Upon arrival for the interview, students were informed that the audiotapes would only be used for

transcription and would later be destroyed. Students were asked if they wished to continue with the interview and all students agreed to proceed with the interview.

Each face-to-face interview lasted an average of 30 minutes. Students were prepared for the interview due to having the questions beforehand and seemed very open to sharing their feelings and educational experiences. Students were not interviewed in any certain order, other than the day and time that was convenient for them to participate. Students contacted for interviews kept their scheduled appointment with the exception of 5 students who had to change the day and time of their interview. The 30 minute, audio-taped interviews were conducted from mid May 2006 through early June 2006.

Interviews were transcribed and studied for any common themes between the four groups of students studied. Students were given fictitious names in the reporting of the interview data as an effort to protect their confidentiality.

Of the 40 students who were interviewed, 8 were male and 32 were female. Ethnically, the 40 interviewees included 25 White students, 6 African American students, 8 Hispanic students, 0 Asian students, and 1 American Indian student.

In-Depth Interviews

Successful First-generation College Students

The group of successful first-generation college students consisted of 4 males and 6 females. The ethnic breakdown of this group of students was 7 White students, 2 Black students, and 1 Hispanic student. The 10 students ranged in age from 24 to 46

years. The family income range for this group of students was \$20,000 - \$39,000. The mean GPA for this group was 2.89 on a 4.0 scale.

Non-Successful First-generation College Students

The group of non-successful first-generation college students consisted of 1 male and 9 females. The ethnic breakdown of this group of students was 5 White students, 2 Black students, 2 Hispanic students, and 1 American Indian student. The 10 students ranged in age from 19 to 51 years. The average family income for this group of students was \$19,000. The mean GPA for this group was 2.30.

Successful Continuing-generation College Students

The group of successful continuing-generation college students consisted of 3 males and 7 females. The ethnic breakdown of this group of students was 6 White students, 1 Black student, and 3 Hispanic students. The 10 students ranged in age from 23 to 25 years. The average family income for this group of students was in the \$70,000 and above range. The mean GPA for this group was 3.56.

Non-Successful Continuing-generation College Students

The group of non-successful continuing-generation college students consisted of 10 females. The ethnic breakdown of this group of students included 7 White students, 1 Black student, and 2 Hispanic students. The 10 students ranged in age from 21 to 45 years of age. The family income range for this group of students was \$50,000 - \$59,000. The mean GPA for this group was 3.28.

Common Themes

All Participants Interviewed

All 40 face-to-face interviews were transcribed and studied in efforts to identify any common themes between all 4 groups studied. I read each interview numerous times so as not to miss any common themes in the students' responses. As the interviews were reviewed repeatedly, common themes began to emerge for all 4 groups of students. Many of the students used similar words to describe their feelings and experiences about beginning, continuing and withdrawing from college. Many of the first-generation college students expressed the lack of familial support once they enrolled in college. These same students expressed a sense of loss with family and friends once the college semester began. Common themes that emerged for the continuing-generation college students were that each student was comfortable with the process of selecting a major, selecting which courses they needed to enroll in and expected to devote a certain amount of their time to study for courses. Another common theme that emerged for all students participating in this study was the fact that their financial situation required them to work at least on a part-time basis. The majority of students who participated in this study stated that the main reasons for attending North Central Texas College was because it was "close to home," or because "the price was affordable." This is consistent with the research that discovered many community college students choose to attend community colleges because of the small classes, location, price, small class size and the technical programs they offer (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005).

Successful First-generation College Students

For successful first-generation college student 4 themes emerged. First, this group of students expressed feelings of not being sure if they were smart enough to make good grades. They weren't quite sure if they had the academic skills to learn the material presented in class.

Secondly, this group of students expressed a determination to persist until they obtained a certificate or degree. Many stated they would "never quit" or "was too stubborn to quit." Benard (1991) believed that individuals have an innate capacity for resiliency. She defined resiliency as a quality in children who, though exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to failure. She believed that what makes students resilient is their strength of individual characteristics.

Thirdly, consistent with the literature, while conducting the interviews, both successful and non-successful first-generation community college students expressed a lack of familial support while attending college (Billson and Brooks-Terry, 1982, Billson, 1987; Brook-Terry, 1988). This lack of support extended from the time they initially decided to enroll in college and through the time they either dropped out of college or graduated. Both groups of first-generation college students expressed a sense of being "terrified," "apprehensive," "overwhelmed," "unprepared" and "alone" during their first few weeks of college. Many of the first-generation college students expressed the lack of familial support once they enrolled in college. These same students expressed a sense of loss with family and friends once the college semester began.

One student stated during the interview, "When I began college, I was so anxious and scared. I had been programmed to believe that I was not smart enough for college

because my father told me so. He was an alcoholic and at times, stupid was my middle name. It took my husband many years of deprogramming to give me the courage to step into the classroom. When I finally made the choice to enroll in college, my palms were sweating and my knees were shaking. I had so many doubts about my ability to be successful in college. I had been told for so long that I would never be anything, that I was going to be a loser all my life. My husband had tried for years to restore my self-esteem and self confidence, but in the back of my mind I had always doubted if I was smart enough to go to college. Was my husband right or my daddy right? My husband won this debate, my overall GPA is 3.87.”

Lastly, this group of students expressed the difficulty of balancing familial and educational responsibilities. Many of these students worked at least part-time outside the home while attending college. Others had husbands and children to take care as well as household responsibilities to manage. Ashley said, “The most difficult struggle for me is balancing responsibilities between home, work, school and deciding which suffers when time constraints are there. I have two sons, a full-time job and a desire to attend college at least part-time. This places a huge burden on my shoulders when more than one major event occurs at the same time. For instance when I have a major test at school, one of my sons has a soccer game, the other has a school play and I am asked to work overtime that week. Which one gets the short end of the stick when all responsibilities can’t be met?” another student stated “I have to stay with it, because if I don’t succeed I will let myself down as well as my kids. This is a must for me at this juncture of my career. The money that this degree will bring will create financial stability for me and my family. I have decided that I can not depend on anyone to take care of

us, but myself. Once my divorce was finalized I realized that it was up to me to provide for my family, my ex-husband sure wasn't going to pay child support, even though the judge told him to, I knew it was going to be up to me. There have been many times when I have wanted to quit because I was overwhelmed with everything, but I can't. I have to do this."

One student talked about the pressure to perform well in class while trying to take care of her two young boys and her father. This divorced mother of two was also working full-time as a secretary. "I have to stay in college and get this degree to better myself and to set an example for my little boys. We had to move back home with my parents so that I could afford to attend college. My parents help me with childcare and money so that I can focus on my classes. Without the help of my mom and dad and other extended family members I truly do not know how I would make it in college. I will not let myself fail at this goal, I will graduate with a nursing degree and get a good job that pays me well enough to support my family and help pay back my parents." Failure was not an option for her as well as many other students in this group.

Non-Successful First-generation College Students

The literature indicates that first-generation college students are often the largest group of students to leave the college or university before they obtain a certificate or degree (Billson and Brooks-Terry, 1982, Billson, 1987; Brooks-Terry, 1988).

For non-successful first-generation college students 3 primary themes emerged. First, this group of students expressed a lack of financial support was the main reason they were unable to re-enroll in college. Most of the students in this group stated that they

were only dropping out of college until they could earn enough money to pay for college and their household bills. Jackie said during the interview, “Financial support is what I needed. My wife makes too much money for us to qualify for financial aid, but we make just enough to pay our bills. I don’t understand the system that lets so many students fall through the cracks. I know I have the ability to do college level work, but I do not have the ability to pay for college. I cannot afford to work and go to college – so I work” another student stated “the educational system is telling the students to choose between working and qualifying for financial aid. If we work and make enough money to pay our bills and feed our families, we no longer qualify for aid even though we don’t make enough for both. If we stop working we could qualify for financial aid based on our income level, but if we stop working, we can not provide for our families – what do you do?” This creates a very difficult situation for students who do not have the financial means to pay for college. Working students have less time to study and therefore often fall behind or drop out of classes completely. Horn et al. (1998) found that students who are employed full-time have a higher rate of leaving college before obtaining a degree or certificate.

Secondly, this group of students expressed they struggled with family responsibilities and were unable to successfully manage them along with attending classes. A few of the students in this group stated that they were unable to pay for childcare while they were attending college and had no one in their family to assist them with childcare. Most of these student’s extended family members had to work in order to support their families and could not offer any time to assist them with childcare. Lindsey stated, “My sister would help me watch my kids while I went to college, but she has to

work herself. My mom is not physically able to watch my kids because she has a bad back. I really want to go to college, but I can't take my kids to class with me – believe me, I tried that once and got in trouble with my teacher. So I had to drop out of college. My mom and dad don't really think that college is that important anyway. I can get a job at Wal-Mart or somewhere and make pretty good money.” Family and friends of first-generation college students can be non-supportive and even discouraging. To these students, the price of personal growth can imply loss; loss of the family support, loss of friendships and loss of the “known” (London, 1989). Parents can be distrusting of the educational system, therefore, not financially supporting the younger, first-generation college student. This lack of financial support often forces the student to work in order to have the means to attend college (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992).

Thirdly, students in this group had family and friends who did not see the importance of obtaining a college degree and therefore did not support or encourage their decision to attend college. Macie said, “It was really hard for me to attend college because my mom and dad, really my whole family, did not want me to go. They all said I could spend the same amount of time working and make money now instead of spending all that time in class. I told them that I could make more money with a degree, but they just don't see it. They also say that if I live with them I have to do my part to help with the bills since I am not in high school anymore.”

London (1989) found that family and friends of first-generation college students can be non-supportive and even discouraging. To these students, the price of personal growth can imply loss; loss of the family support, loss of friendships and loss of the

“known.” Parents can be distrusting of the educational system, therefore, not financially supporting the younger, first-generation college student. This lack of financial support often forces the student to work in order to have the means to attend college (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992).

Successful Continuing-generation College Students

For successful continuing-generation college students 2 themes emerged. First, this group of students expressed a feeling of support both emotionally and financially from their friends and family. One student stated, “I had the resources to attend college because my family has been very supportive in my decision to do so. My parents help me with tuition and my grandfather helps me buy books so that I won’t have any debt when I graduate college.” This statement seems to support the literature in finding that continuing generation college students perceived their families as providing both financial and emotional support for attending college than did the first-generation college students studied (York-Anderson & Bowman, D.C., 1991).

Secondly, many of the students in this group expected to transfer to a university to pursue at least a bachelor’s. Four students in this group had already obtained a bachelor’s degree and were returning to the community college for a second career choice such as an Associate’s Degree in nursing. Melinda stated, “I have worked in the whole of corporate business and now I want to do something with my life. I thought a second career in nursing would be good for me.” Students in this group also stated their surprise at the way in which the “younger” students treated the instructors with disrespect. Many of them said that was unacceptable behavior when they were in

younger. They were shocked at the lack of appreciation for the educational process and the opportunity to attend college.

Participants in this study were supported by their parents and other family members and were motivated by those family members to attend college. In the majority of the ten students in this group, the father was usually the parent who held some form of a degree from either a community college or university. The majority of the degrees were received from a community college and two of the fathers were police officers. The research findings of Allen (1999) support the findings in this study. Allen discovered through research that high levels of family emotional support and involvement, parents with a degree in higher education, and high academic performance in high school all increase the college student's persistence until degree completion.

Non-Successful Continuing-generation College Students

For non-successful continuing-generation college students several themes emerged. First, all of the students in this category expressed the main reason they began college was to obtain a better job than their parents had or to obtain a job that would allow them to provide for their families in ways their parents could not provide for them.

Secondly, the main reasons for all of the 10 students for attending North Central Texas College was because it was "close to home," "price was affordable" and finally because NCTC was not as large as a university.

Thirdly, most of the students in this category either held part-time or full-time jobs while attending college. Seven of the 10 students held full-time, 40 hours a week jobs, while the other held part-time jobs and worked at least 20 hours each week. Other common themes included that they were “excited” about beginning college for the first time and felt very confident that they would do well in college. Nicole said, “I feel I have a high self esteem because I have confidence in myself and the ability I have to achieve my goals – I feel I am just as capable as anyone else in the world.” They were supported by their parents and other family members and were motivated by those family members to attend college. Unlike the unsuccessful first-generation community college students in this study, participants in this group of students did not drop for financial reason or a lack of familial support and appreciation for a college degree. Six of the women who participated in this study did not return in the spring because of family responsibilities such as the lack of a suitable daycare, not a lack of financial means to pay for the daycare. Another reason stated by this group for not continuing the next semester was due to having a sick family member and having the responsibility to care for that individual.

Charly stated “my husband has had some medical issues which is why I could not finish out the fall semester and that is the only problem or obstacle that I encountered. My husband should have a few more procedures during the spring semester and after that I will be clear to enroll and complete my degree. I have every intention of completing my degree once it is feasibly possible for me to do so. I realize the importance of having my degree. Follow up with me in a couple of years to see where I am.”

Summary of the Findings

This section of Chapter IV will address answers to the research questions that have guided this study. This section will also report findings that relate to the literature reviewed for the purposes of this study.

Research Question 1

To what extent do resiliency traits as indicated on the Interest and Attitude Survey differ among first-generation college students who continue to enroll or persist until they obtain a degree or a certificate and first-generation college students who withdraw from the institution prior to obtaining a degree or certificate during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters?

In comparing the responses of the successful first-generation community college students and the non-successful first-generation students, Table 5 reflects that the mean responses of 6 questions were found to be statistically significant at alpha level .05. The mean responses of the enrolled students were higher than their non-enrolled counterparts on Questions 1, 2, 4, 10, and 17. However, the mean response of the non-enrolled students was higher on Question 7.

Based on the self-scored Likert scale that each respondent completed, there was a difference in resiliency traits between the 2 groups studied. Successful first-generation community college students scored themselves higher on the resiliency traits compared to their non-successful first-generation counterparts. Resiliency ratings were generally higher for the successful first-generation community college students than those of their non-successful first-generation community college counterparts in the areas of feeling socially competent, possessing problem solving skills, being independent, having a sense of purpose, having positive relationships, high

expectations of self, strong sense of spirituality, feeling that life is what you make it and being adaptable/flexible.

These differences seem to corroborate LePage-Lee's (1997) findings supporting the belief that successful first-generation students possess a stronger sense of self, believe that their destiny is controlled by themselves, and may achieve through self-reliance and internal motivation. The findings in this study also support Komada's (2002) research which found successful first-generation community college students possess a "can do" attitude and tend to pursue and achieve against all odds. Unlike Komada's study, whose participants were traditional freshman students who all lived in residence halls, the successful first-generation community college students in this study were older and had children and were motivated to succeed because of a sense of responsibility to their families and a sense that they could not quit for fear of letting down their children or husbands.

Results of this study are supported by the findings of Benard (1991) who found that individuals have an innate capacity for resiliency. She defined resiliency as a quality in individuals who, though exposed to significant stress and adversity in their lives, do not succumb to failure. Much like the successful first-generation community college students in this study, Benard identified certain common qualities or resilient characteristics to include: (1) social competence, (2) problem-solving skills, (3) critical consciousness, (4) autonomy, and (5) sense of purpose. Benard (1993) further reported that these resilient individuals were reportedly optimistic about their futures therefore allowing them to gain some sort of control over their environment. Resilient

youth had a sense of purpose and believe in their ability to influence events around them.

Research Question 2

To what extent do resiliency traits as identified on the Interest and Attitude Survey differ among continuing-generation college students who continue to enroll or persist until they obtain a degree or a certificate and continuing-generation college students who withdrew from the institution prior to obtaining a degree or certificate during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters?

A comparison of the responses provided by successful continuing-generation community college students and non-successful continuing community college students revealed statistically significant differences between groups in items 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, & 16. In all cases, except Question 18, the enrolled cohort demonstrated higher mean responses than their non-enrolled counterparts.

Resiliency ratings were generally higher for the successful continuing-generation community college students than those of their non-successful continuing-generation community college counterparts in the areas of feeling socially competent, possessing problem solving skills, having a sense of purpose, having had a negative educational experience, high expectations of self, strong sense of spirituality, high self esteem, feeling that life is what you make it and being individually resourceful.

Research Question 3

As indicated through the face-to-face interviews, to what extent, if any, do successful first-generation college students report emotional familial support system?

Consistent with the literature, while conducting the interviews, both successful and non-successful first-generation community college students expressed a lack of

familial support while attending college (Billson and Brooks-Terry, 1982, Billson, 1987; Brook-Terry, 1988). This lack of support extended from the time they initially decided to enroll in college and extended through the time they either dropped out of college or graduated. Both groups of first-generation college students expressed a sense of being “terrified,” “overwhelmed,” “unprepared” and “alone” during their first few weeks of college.

Many of the first-generation college students expressed the lack of familial support once they enrolled in college. These same students expressed a sense of loss with family and friends once the college semester began.

Melissa stated that when she decided to enroll in college her mother and father initially supported the idea, but once she began spending time away from the family attending classes and participating in study groups her family members began to complain that she was spending too much time at school. Many of her former friends and family members told that they thought she felt she was “better than them” because she was in college. It became increasingly more difficult for her to find family and friends to assist her with caring for her daughter while she was in class or participating in her study groups on campus. She said she tried to explain that she was only seeking a better life for herself and her daughter, but she continued to experience the often hostile and cold feelings as she continued her education. She had tears in her eyes when she explained that she truly did not believe that she was any better than those in her family who had not decided to enroll in college, but that she did seem to want more for her future than they did. They seemed happy or at least content with their living situation while she desired more.

Research Question 4

As indicated through the face-to-face interviews, to what extent, if any, do successful, continuing-generation college students report emotional familial support system.

During the face-to-face interviews, continuing-generation college students expressed a sense of support from their family and friends. Most of the students in this group of students expressed they discussed their decision to enroll in college with their parents. Many students in this group also received financial support from their parents, unlike their first-generation college student counterparts. This group of students expressed a feeling of encouragement to succeed and to obtain university level degrees. Both successful and non-successful continuing-generation college students expressed that their parents were involved in assisting them select a major area of study as well as what classes to enroll in.

Much like both successful and non-successful first-generation community college students, these students often had families to support and felt the desire to complete this college degrees and the responsibility to care for their husbands, children or parents.

Horn, Chen and Adelman (1998) found in their research of resilient at-risk children, that parent and peer engagement indicators were strong influences on whether or not these students enrolled in an institution of higher learning, especially a four year institution. Students whose parents frequently discussed school-related matters with the students once they were in high school had better odds of enrolling in college. This was also true of students whose friends had plans to attend college, in fact, the chances of attending a four year institution increased as much as 4 times if their friends had plans to attend college.

Research Question 5

What institutional student support services as identified by the subjects assisted the successful first-generation college student?

Responses indicate that successful first-generation community college students took advantage of financial aid, counseling and advising, as well as tutoring in the Academic and Student Support Centers on each of the 3 campuses.

Research Question 6

What, if any, institutional student support services as identified by the subjects who withdrew might have assisted them in persisting to a degree or certificate?

In reviewing the data collected, the primary student support services that students who withdrew from the institution needed and was not available was child care as well as financial support of some form other than the federal PELL grant. Many of the non-successful continuing generation community college students in this category did not qualify for any federal or state financial assistance due to their reported income; however, these students expressed a lack of additional or “extra” income to pay for college. These students seemed to fall through the “educational cracks” when it comes to funding their educations. They made too much money to qualify for aid, but not enough to fund the costs of tuition, fees and the cost of books along with their other financial responsibilities.

Another area most often stated by the participants was a lack of feeling connected to their academic advisor. Students stated that they did not feel the advisors cared for them as individuals. This is consistent with the institution’s published Student Opinion Survey for this time period that asked the students to rate how that felt their

academic advisors were “concerned for them as an individual.” Students responded with a rating of a 4.23 score on a 5.00 Likert scale. This reflected a decline in the rating of a 4.77 for the same question the previous year the survey was conducted.

Smith and Allen (2006) conceptualized that institution of higher education should re-evaluate their advising procedures due to the fact that most models of advising are more than 30 years old and do not address the changing student demographics, student needs, technical advancements, and the growing demand for institutional accountability. The researchers found that an ever increasing number of students are employed at least 20 or more hours per week in off campus employment. The researchers also found that the student population is older and more career focused than students in the past. Smith and Allen also suggest that the failure of institutions to address this change, place these students are a greater risk of dropping out of college before obtaining a certificate or degree.

Additional Findings

Although there were no research questions addressing the resiliency traits or differences that might exist between the 2 groups, I then decided to examine the data between the successful first-generation and the successful continuing-generation community college students. Since the data had already been collected and was available, I also compared the non-successful first-generation and the non-successful continuing-generation community college students responses.

In comparing the responses of the successful first-generation community college students and the successful continuing-generation community college students, no statistically significant differences were found in the responses provided.

In comparing the responses of the non-successful first-generation community college students and the non-successful continuing-generation students, the mean responses of 3 questions were found to be statistically significant at alpha level .05. Non-successful first-generation community college students in this study rated themselves higher than their non-successful continuing-generation community colleges students on having a high self esteem and believing that life is what you make it on a statistically significant level. The highest significant findings were that non-successful first-generation community college students reported believing that life is what you make it than those of the non-successful continuing-generation community college student (NSFG mean of 3.04 as compared to NSCG mean of 2.56).

I also found that given the numbers of each of the four groups, it appears that the same percentages in each group continued or dropped out. Of the 2247 first-generation students enrolled during the fall 2005, 1461 or 65% re-enrolled in the spring 2006 semester compared to the 3028 or 65% of the 4659 continuing-generation students who did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.

Additionally, of the 2247 first-generation students who were enrolled during the fall 2005 semester, 786 or 35% did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester compared to 1631 or 35% of the 3028 continuing-generation students who did not re-enroll for the spring 2006 semester.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify successful and unsuccessful first-generation college students (students whose parents have never attended college) and to identify what, if any, differences existed in the resiliency traits among successful first-generation college students and unsuccessful first-generation college students.

This study also sought to examine the reasons, traits and student support services that successful first and continuing-generation college students report as contributing to achieving their higher education goals.

This study identified what institutional student support services as identified by the subjects assisted the successful first-generation college student as well as what, if any, institutional student support services as identified by the subjects who withdrew might have assisted them in persisting to a degree or certificate.

A sample of 164 students were surveyed by collecting demographic, resiliency traits, attitudinal characteristics, level of familial support and reasons for dropping out of college. A sub-sample of 40 students participated in a face-to-face, in-depth interview. The interviews consisted of 20 questions seeking to identify their reasons for dropping out or persisting in college, level of familial support and the level of institutional support received.

Descriptive Data

Responses to the 18 item Interest and Attitude Survey were classified by 1 of 4 student groups: Successful first-generation community college students ($n = 58$); non-

successful first-generation community college students ($n = 29$); successful continuing-generation community college students ($n = 51$); and non-successful continuing-generation community college students ($n = 26$). The data sets were entered into SPSS, Version 14.0, where independent sample t -tests were conducted on each combination of the groups to determine if statistically significant differences were present between the means of the individual questions.

In comparing the responses of the successful first-generation community college students and the non-successful first-generation students, (Table 3) the mean responses of 6 questions were found to be statistically significant at alpha level .05. The mean responses of the enrolled students were higher than their non-enrolled counterparts on Questions 1, 2, 4, 10, and 17. The questions for these items include: (1) socially competent, (2) problem solving skills, (4) sense of purpose, (10) strong spirituality, (17) adaptable/flexible. However, the mean response of the non-enrolled students was higher on item (7) parents' involvement.

Resiliency ratings were generally higher for the successful first-generation community college students than those of their non-successful first-generation community college counterparts in the areas of feeling socially competent, possessing problem solving skills, having a sense of purpose, strong sense of spirituality, and being adaptable/flexible.

A comparison of the responses provided by successful and non-successful continuing community college students (Table 4) revealed statistically significant differences between groups in Items 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, & 16. The questions for the items include; (4) sense of purpose, (6) negative educational experience, (9) high

expectations (10) strong spirituality, (11) high self-esteem, (15) life is what you make it, (16) individual resourcefulness.

In comparing the responses of the successful first-generation community college students and the successful continuing-generation community college students (Table 5), no statistically significant differences were found in the responses provided.

Finally, the responses provided by the non-successful first-generation students were compared with those of the non-successful continuing-generation students (Table 6). Statistically significant differences were obtained in Questions 1, 11, & 15. Questions for the item includes: (1) socially competent, (11) high self-esteem, (15) life is what you make it. Non-successful first-generation students demonstrated higher response means in Questions 11 and 15 with the non-successful continuing-generation students possessing a higher response mean in Question 1.

Resiliency ratings were generally higher for the successful continuing-generation community college students than those of their non-successful continuing-generation community college counterparts in the areas of feeling socially competent, possessing problem solving skills, having a sense of purpose, having had a negative educational experience, high expectations of self, strong sense of spirituality, high self esteem, feeling that life is what you make it and being individually resourceful.

Interview Themes

Common themes emerged from the in-depth, face-to-face interviews between all 4 groups of students studied. All 40 face-to-face interviews were transcribed and studied in efforts to identify any common themes between all 4 groups studied. I read

each interview numerous times so as not to miss any common themes in the student's responses. As the interviews were listened to over and over, common themes began to emerge for all four groups of students. Many of the students used similar words to describe their feeling and experiences about beginning, continuing and withdrawing from college. Many of the first-generation college students expressed the lack of familial support once they enrolled in college. These same students expressed a sense of loss with family and friends once the college semester began. Students stated that their families and friends often said the students thought they were better than their family members. The students stated they did not think they were better, but that they wanted something better for themselves and their children. Students also stated that their families and friends seemed distant once they began college. London found that family and friends of first-generation college students can be non-supportive and even discouraging. To these students, the price of personal growth can imply loss; loss of the family support, loss of friendships and loss of the "known" (London, 1989). Parents can be distrusting of the educational system, therefore not financially supporting the younger, first-generation college student. This may force the student to work in order to have the means to attend college (London, 1989, Shaw, Valadez & Rhoad, 1999, Zwerling & London, 1992).

Common themes for the continuing-generation college students seemed to be that students were comfortable with the process of selecting a major, selecting course for enrollment and expected to devote a certain amount of their time to study for courses. This group of students also felt comfortable with their parents being part of

their educational experience and even sought out their parents opinions as to which classes to enroll in and what major to choose.

Another common theme that emerged for all students participating in this study was the fact that their financial situation required them to work at least on a part-time basis. The majority of students who participated in this study stated that the main reasons for attending North Central Texas College was because it was “close to home,,” or because “the price was affordable.”

One student talked about the pressure to perform well in class while trying to take care of her two young boys and her father. This divorced mother of two was also working full-time as a secretary. “I have to stay in college and get this degree to better myself and to set an example for my little boys. I don’t want to live with my father for the rest of my life. I also want my boys to know how important it is to get a college education. No matter how tired I get, I must complete this degree.” Failure was not an option for her as well as many other students in this group.

This same refusal to fail was implanted in the women in LePage-Lees’ study, these women did not receive familial support and consistent with the other research, some considered their families as obstacles to their education. These women did not perform well while in high school and felt that being able to attend college was in itself a tremendous triumph. LePage-Lees found that 90% of these women were firstborn children in the family, 90% grew up in rural communities; 95% reported they were heavily involved in church or community activities and most claimed that their greatest support came from their husbands and children. LePage-Lees’ research resulted in a list of common personality traits from these twenty-one women. The common

personality traits included; independence and maturity, benevolence, some self-confidence, perfectionism, and perseverance. However, education did not come easily for these women – many lacked confidence and felt out of place, yet they persisted because they were motivated to change their lives and the lives of their families (LePage-Lee, 1997).

Summary of Findings

Consistent with the literature, findings of this study indicate that first-generation college students are older than their continuing-generation college students when they first enroll in college, have lower familial yearly incomes, have less familial support to attend and remain in college and have a higher tendency to “drop out” of college before obtaining a degree or certificate (Terenzini et al., 1994).

Participants in this study initially enrolled in college to reach a common goal of obtaining a better paying job or working in the field in which they obtained their education. Although more continuing-generation students enrolled with plans to persist until obtaining a graduate degree than did those first-generation college students.

Many of the students in this study identified a need for institutional supported child care in order to remain in college. This would suggest that many colleges and universities who truly wish to assist this group of students would actively seek to identify funding for this area of student support services.

Many of the first-generation community college students who participated in this study expressed a sense of not feeling a part of the institution, a need for additional financial aid and a reoccurring request for child care assistance. These reoccurring

student requests would seem to influence student services personnel in their decision to offer special programs. Student services personnel should examine ways in which to providing support for this group of students in efforts to assist them in persisting until graduation. Perhaps, additional funding, support groups for first-generation college students to meet other students like them in efforts to form a connection with the college and with other students like them.

Research suggests that the majority of first-generation students' who drop out of college, do so for reasons other than an academically poor performance, but due to the difficulties they experience trying to balance their multiple roles as a student, parent, employee and family member (McConnell, 2000).

To the extent possible, identification of individuals who exemplify generalized dropout tendencies should be contacted before they make a decision to dropout or as soon as they file a request to dropout with the institution. The majority of students who participated in this study stated they had decided to attend this community college because it was "close to home" and "the price was very affordable." College administrators should keep this in mind when making the decision to raise tuition and fees. The difficulty in paying for an education seemed to be a common theme. Perhaps they should seek to obtain additional funding from other sources as an alternative to increasing costs for the students.

Given that research indicates first-generation college students are the first to leave before obtaining a degree, Pike and Kuh suggests that college Admissions officers should design publications and give presentations that target first-generation students. Presentations could include explanations of specific behaviors of successful

first-generation community college students who have persisted until graduation. Working closely with area high schools to identify students who are first-generation college students and working closely with those students to raise their educational aspirations. Pike and Kuh also suggested the implementation of a program that would alert college academic advisors which students are first-generation college students from the group of students they are assigned to provide academic advising. Counselors and advisors could encourage first-generation college students to become involved in activities both inside and outside the classroom to assist in establishing a connection with the college campus. Implementation of a training program that would give counselors and advisors the tool and resources to assist the first-generation college student in their pursuit of a degree would also be beneficial (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

Pike and Kuh's findings are challenged when you consider that a common theme among study participants was the need to work at least part-time. Students might have a difficult time becoming involved in activities outside of the classroom because of work and family responsibilities – thus the need for low tuition and additional sources of funding for low income students.

Pike & Kuh, (2005) make the following charge:

An institution of higher education cannot change the lineage of its students. But can implement interventions that increase the odds that first-generation college students “get ready, “get in,” and “get through” by changing the way those students view college and by altering what they do after they arrive.

Implications for Colleges and Universities

While this study sought to identify what student services that might have assisted the students in their quest for a certificate of an associate degree, this should not

absolve other institutional departments from the responsibility of participating in the student's educational experience. Accrediting commissions, the general public and even the legislative branches of our government have closely scrutinized educational institutions persistence and graduation rates in past years and all current indications suggests this scrutiny will continue to increase. These bodies continue to call for greater institutional accountability in the areas of student learning and institutional effectiveness (Manning, Kinze & Schuh, 2006).

Tinto (1996) stated that most colleges and universities placed the responsibility for student persistence on the shoulders of student services personnel with such initiatives as orientation, developmental classes, special residence hall programming, career and mental health counseling, workshops, advising and tutoring. However, Manning, Kinze and Schuh (2006) found the practice of assigning responsibility for student retention primarily to those in student services and excusing other institutional departments to be problematic. They suggest persistence is greatly increased when accomplished by academic affairs and student affairs working closely together towards this common goal. Tools that increase the effectiveness of persistence in the area of academic affairs includes, learning communities, service learning, study abroad programs, diversity initiatives and capstone experiences.

An 18 month study conducted by Manning, Kinze and Schuh, the DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practices) study sought to understand the successful educational practices of 20 colleges and universities that had higher than predicted graduation rates. The researchers found while studying the institutions that their student affairs departments were profoundly different from other colleges. The

study identified six interdependent conditions and properties shared by all 20 institutions that directly contributed to student success. The six conditions included; (1) “Living” mission and “Lived” educational philosophy, (2) Unshakeable focus on student learning, (3) Environments adaptable for educational enrichment, (4) Clear pathways to student success, (5) Improvement-oriented ethos, (6) Shared responsibility for educational quality and student success (Manning, Kinze, & Schuh). This research indicates that students begin to learn the moment they step foot on campus and further, thus a student’s education doesn’t exist only in the classroom.

McConnell (2000) compiled a list of recommendations for services and programs that community colleges could integrate to assist the first-generation student be successful in their certificate or degree attainment. The researcher recommended colleges offer activities that included family members, implementation of a core curriculum designed specifically for first-generation students that foster common experiences to help experience feelings of belonging within the institution, using classroom time to create learning communities that help these students connect with the institution, and hold faculty and staff workshops to educate them on the difficulties first-generation students face.

Limitations of the Study

This study utilized the quantitative and qualitative research methods. One inherent limitation of the qualitative research is that the sample was small and could not be presumed to be representative of the population. Another limitation is the length of time between the student dropping out of college and being contacted for participation

in the study. The return rate for each of the 4 groups studied was much less than anticipated. After a second and third set of emails were sent to the same groups of students attempting to follow-up on non-responses, and after individual follow-up telephone calls were made to encourage students to participate in the study, the decision was made to proceed with analyzing the data. However, the results are a major limitation of the study and thus an inability to generalize the findings of this research to other similar students at this institution. Though results of this study can not be generalized to all students attending NCTC these results are consistent with the literature reviewed for this study and extends these findings to the community college context. Similar research must find ways to increase participation rates of students regarding these factors.

Recommendations for Future Study

A recommendation for future study would be to identify first-generation community college students at the beginning of each semester and have a counselor make contact with each student either by email, phone call or personal visit. Addressing student issues as they experience problems may assist in preventing the student from leaving college. Soliciting input from students who drop out of college and in this case, 8 months after they had dropped out of college, proved to be extremely difficult and in some cases impossible due to students not having updated email or contact information in the student database software.

Terenzini et al. (1994) stated that continuing-generation college students' benefit from social validation identified as a need to make friends and fitting in socially

compared to first-generation college students benefiting from the academically validating experience:

Validation is empowering, confirming, and supportive. It is a series of in- and out-of-class experiences with family, peers, faculty members, and staff through which students come to feel accepted in their community, receive confirming signals that they do can be successful in college and are worthy of a place there, have their previous work and life experiences recognized as legitimate forms of knowledge and learning, have their contributions in class recognized as valuable and so on. (p.66)

Terenzini et al. (1994) provided a list of 7 suggestions for colleges to ease the transition from high school to higher education: (1) "Promote awareness of the varying character of the transition process for different kinds of students," (2) "Early validation appears to be a central element in students' successful transition to college," (3) "Involve faculty in new student orientation programs," (4) "Orient parents as well as students," (5) "The transition to college involves both in- and out-of-class experiences," (6) "Institutional accommodations are required," (7) "Somebody has to care," meaning that the entire institution should adopt the philosophy to care and reach out to this population of students (p.69-72). Since current research indicates that students look to their parents to assist them in choosing a college major and guidance as to what courses to enroll in, it would make sense to design informational programs that include the parents of college age students. Training should be implemented to assist all employees at the institution in customer service. Community college administrators should review these seven recommendations and make them a vital part of strategic planning and learning outcomes.

Future study should also be given to include investigations into first-generation community college students, perhaps on a statewide basis, that examines differences in age, gender, ethnic background, marital status, number and ages of dependents and employment status.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Study: Resiliency and the Successful First-Generation Community College Student: Identifying Effective Student Support Services

Principal Investigator: Condoa M. Parrent

You are being asked to take part in a research study under the direction of Ms. Condoa M. Parrent. Approximately 400 students will participate in this research.

Purposes:

The purpose of this research is to examine what factors help first-generation college students to persist through re-enrollment or obtaining a certificate or degree. This research is being conducted as a requirement for an EdD degree from the University of North Texas.

Duration and Location:

Participation in this study will involve completing a demographic questionnaire and a short survey that should take approximately 30 minutes total to complete. Later, approximately 40 students will be asked to participate in one thirty minute face-to-face interview at North Central Texas College. These components of the study will begin mid May 2006 through early June 2006.

Audio taping:

During the one hour interview participants will be audio taped by the researcher. The interviews will be audio taped in order for the researcher to review what was said. You may choose not to be taped and/or you may choose not to continue in this part of the study at any time in the process.

Procedures:

In this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding your personality traits and why you are interested in obtaining a degree.

The survey will be given to you once you have agreed to participate in the study by submitting your signed consent form.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

Participants for this study are being recruited from first and continuing-generation community college students enrolled during the fall 2005 and spring 2006 semesters at North Central Texas College.

You should not participate in this study if you are under the age of 18.

Risks and Discomforts:

As with any study, you should be aware that unforeseen problems may occur, but the likelihood of any serious problem is believed to be low. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time for any

reason. Students involved will be identified only to the researcher for tracking purposes. No one other than the researcher will know your identity. In the interview phase, students participating will be given fictitious names in the study.

All information will remain confidential. The data involved in this research, that is, your responses will be stored under lock and key for a period of time not to exceed three years. After the researcher has completed work for the study, (and not more than three years), the data will be destroyed. i.e. tapes will be erased and transcriptions and survey will be shredded.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw from the Study:

Subject's participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or may discontinue your participation at any time.

Ms. Condoa M. Parrent has the right to stop your participation in this study at any time.

Use of Research Results:

The data obtained in this study will assist current investigators in understanding the relationship between persistence and retention of college students. Such an understanding will be helpful as investigators conduct research on why students choose a college and then why students stay or leave through until graduation. Data will be used in the researcher's dissertation.

Benefits:

Study participants will be contributing to faculty and the administration's understanding of what makes the learning experience of future students more successful.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

In order to match surveys with interview responses, it will be necessary to requests students' names for purposes of identification but only to the researcher. However, confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher in that the information is gathered from this survey will be only be reported in an aggregate form during the analysis phase of the study. Individual students will not be identified.

All information will remain confidential. The data involved in this research, that is, your responses will be stored under lock and key in a filing cabinet for a period of time not to exceed three years. After the researcher is through with the data (and not more than three years), the data will be destroyed, i.e. tapes will be erased and transcriptions and surveys will be shredded.

Any individual's responses discussed in the dissertation will be given a fictitious name.

Institutional Review Board Approval:

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (940) 565-3940. Contact the UNT IRB with any questions regarding your rights as a research subject.

Subject Agreement:

I have read the information provided above and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. If I have any questions or concerns that arise in connection with my participation in this study, I should contact Ms. Condoa M. Parrent at (940) 668-4240. I may also contact Dr. Ron Newsom, faculty advisor at the University of North Texas at (940)565-2722 for any questions regarding this study. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form.

Name of Research Participant (Print)

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Research Participant

Date

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. NAME:		
2. Research I.D. Number		
3. Date of Birth		
4. Gender	MALE	FEMALE
5. Race:	White Black American Indian	Hispanic Asian
6. Your Cumulative GPA:		
7. Total Family Yearly Gross Income: Check one		
\$9,999 or less		
\$10,000 – \$19,000		
\$20,000 – \$29,000		
\$30,000 – \$39,000		
\$40,000 - \$49,000		
\$50,000 – \$59,000		
\$60,000 – \$69,000		
\$70,000 – \$99,000		
\$100,000 – above		
8. Educational Level of Parents: Check one	Mother	Father
Grade School		
Some High School		
GED		
High School Graduate		
Some College		
Associate Degree		
Bachelor's Degree		
Graduate Degree		
Other (Specify)		

APPENDIX C
INTEREST AND ATTITUDE SURVEY

Please indicate by circling if you are willing to be interviewed	YES	NO
PART ONE: Please answer the following questions.		
<p>1. What would you say is the main reason you are or are not continuing enrollment towards degree or certificate obtainment?</p>		
<p>2. At this time, what is the highest degree you plan to earn in higher education? (i.e. Certificate, Associates Degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, or doctorate)</p>		
<p>3. What would you like to do after all of your education is completed?</p>		

PART TWO: Rank order your top 5 reasons (1 as the highest) why you attend college?	
	Broaden my understanding of my community/world
	Improve my socioeconomic status
	Meet new and interesting people
	Reduce my dependence on other people
	Increase my self-confidence
	My parents or family said to go
	Strengthen my basic skills, i.e. reading and math
	Study new and different subjects
	To get a job
	To prepare for graduate or professional (medical, law) school
	Because it is a means out of the labor workforce
	Other (specify)
PART THREE: Place the number below in the space provided that best describes you.	
I feel I: 4= <i>always</i> 3= <i>usually</i> 2= <i>not usually</i> 1= <i>never</i>	
	Am socially competent
	Possess problem solving skills
	Am dependent
	Have a sense of purpose and future
	Have had positive relationships with others when I was a child
	Have had negative educational experiences when I was a child
	Have parent(s) who are involved in school and my life in general
	Am able to attribute the problems of the world to outside sources (i.e. hunger, crime, violence).
	Have high expectations of myself
	Possess a strong sense of spiritually or religion
	Have high self-esteem
	Am the first born or only child in my family
	Create my own destiny in life
	Am generally content with my life
	Believe life is what you make of it
	Possess individual resourcefulness
	Am adaptable/flexible
	Have a sense of direction i.e. educational/career plans

APPENDIX D

EMAIL REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

09-May-06

Lindsey Kirk
P.O. Box 1799
Gainesville, TX 76241

Dear Lindsey:

You are being asked to participate in a study being conducted at North Central Texas College by Condoa M. Parrent, a graduate student enrolled at the University of North Texas.

The study will seek to identify and examine the resiliency traits of successful and non-successful first and continuing generation community college students.

Participants who agree to take part in this study will be asked to complete a brief survey and demographic questionnaire.

If you would like to take part in this study or if you have any questions and would like more information about this study, please contact Condoa M. Parrent at 940-668-4240, by email at cparrent@nctc.edu or by stopping by the Gainesville Campus Student Services Office in room 113.

Sincerely,
Condoa M Parrent

APPENDIX E

EMAIL TO STUDENTS WITH INSTRUCTIONS

All information collected is confidential and can be emailed back to me.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study.

I do have a few forms for you to complete and return to me – if you can complete them and email them back to me – that would be great. I would like the forms completed and returned as soon as possible or by June 14 so that I can compile your answers.

If you are unable to email the documents back to me, you can mail them or drop them off at my office on the Gainesville Campus – room 113, the Corinth Campus – Admissions Office to Mrs. Melinda Carroll or to the Bowie Campus Office to Mrs. Emily Klement. The Corinth and Bowie Campuses will send the forms back to me through inter-campus mail.

After all forms are completed I will select a number of you to participate in one 30 minute face-to-face interview – you may choose not to be interviewed.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study – should you have any questions or concerns after reading the attached information – feel free to contact me via email or telephone.

Thanks,
Condoa

Condoa M. Parrent
Dean of Student Services
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